

What is claimed is:

1. A computer implemented method, comprising:
generating a touch signal with a signet, the touch signal representing a
5 particular signet pattern;
recognizing the particular signet pattern; and
performing an action associated with the particular signet pattern.
2. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein said recognizing includes comparing
10 the touch signal to one or more signet signals.
3. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the action includes opening one or
more restricted areas within a computer system.
- 15 4. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the action includes configuring a
computer system to a particular user.
5. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the action is configured to launch a
program.
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6. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the action includes encrypting or
decoding a message.
7. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein said generating includes detecting
25 contact with a touch sensitive device, said recognizing includes comparing the shape
of a contact area with a list of signet shapes, and wherein the action is performed
when the shape of the contact area matches the signet shape.
8. A computer system, comprising:
30 a touch screen that generates signet data associated with a signet pattern when a
signet having the signet pattern is placed on the touch screen; and
a computer that recognizes the signet data and that initiates an action associated
with the recognized signet data.

9. The computer system as recited in claim 8 wherein the action includes logging onto the computer system, permitting authorized individuals access to restricted areas of the computer system, loading a user profile associated with a user's preferred arrangement of the computer system, permitting access to web content, launching a program, opening a file or document, viewing a menu, making a selection, executing instructions, encrypting or decoding a message, or operating an input device.

10. The computer system as recited in claim 8 wherein the signet corresponds to a ring, a tag, a card, a token, a stamp, or a key.

11. The computer system as recited in claim 8 wherein the signet pattern corresponds to the shape of the signet.

12. The computer system as recited in claim 8 wherein the signet pattern is formed on the signet, the signet pattern being a raised or recessed portion of the signet.

13. The computer system as recited in claim 8 wherein the touch screen is configured with a plurality of sensor coordinates that represent different points on the touch screen, the sensor coordinates activating when the signet is pressed against the touch screen, the activated sensor coordinates representing the shape of the signet pattern.

14. A signet system, comprising:
a touch sensitive area for receiving a signet having a signet pattern; and
a detection system for generating a touch signal when the signet is presented to the touch sensitive area and for extracting shape data associated with the signet pattern from the touch signal.

15. The signet system as recited in claim 14 wherein detection system includes a sensing device and a control device, the sensing device being configured to register touches on the touch sensitive area and the control device being configured to monitor the touches and to translate the touches into shape data.

16. The signet system as recited in claim 15 wherein the sensing device corresponds to a resistive sensing device, a capacitive sensing device, an acoustic wave sensing device or an infrared sensing device.

17. The signet system as recited in claim 15 wherein the control device includes a sensor controller and a processor, the sensor controller being configured to convert the touches into touch events, the processor being configured to interpret the touch events into shape data and to transmit the results to other components.

18. A computer readable medium including at least computer code executable by a computer, the computer code comprising:

storing shape data associated with one or more signets;

generating shape data based on contact with said touch sensitive device;

comparing the generated shape data to the stored shape data; and

performing an action associated with the stored shape data when the generated shape data matches the stored shape data.

19. In a computer based system having a touch sensitive device, a shape recognition method, comprising:

providing baseline signet signals;

generating a current signet signal when a signet is placed on the touch sensitive device;

comparing the current signal to at least one baseline signet signal; and

performing an action based on the current and baseline signet signals.

20. A computer implemented method, comprising:

detecting contact with a touch screen;

generating shape information when contact is detected

comparing the generated shape information with stored shape information;

determining a particular shape in contact with the touch screen based on said comparing;

initiating an action associated with the particular shape when it is determined that the particular shape is the particular shape in contact with the touch screen.